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A LAYMAN'S GUIDE  
TO PROTESTANT  
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# A LAYMAN'S GUIDE TO PROTESTANT WORSHIP

Homer J. R. Elford



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A LAYMAN'S GUIDE TO PROTESTANT WORSHIP

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## **FOREWORD**

The purpose of this book is to provide some practical help to those interested in the aims and processes of public worship as conducted in evangelical Protestant churches.

Services of worship all have some form, even though they all do not adhere to a strict formal pattern. Those who plan, conduct, and participate should know why certain elements are included in an order of worship and what they may expect to experience during the observance.

Even within individual denominations a variety of orders of worship is often used. Particular services warrant different emphases because a distinct purpose may be envisioned.

The chapters of this booklet may be used in a series of classes in the church school, evening meetings, seminars, or new-member training sessions as well as by the individual who is seeking a clearer understanding and appreciation of the Protestant worship service.

Homer J. R. Elford

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# I

## WHY DO WE WORSHIP?

Why do Christians get together to pray, to sing and to listen to sacred music, to hear the Holy Scriptures read, and to give their attention to someone making a speech on some religious subject?

What is the distinctive character of a service of Christian worship?

Is it enough for one to simply "attend" a service of worship, or must one actually "participate" in order to have something creative happen as he worships?

What is supposed to take place in the inner life of the person who really worships?

These are some of the questions which are often raised by people who are in dead earnest about making the worship experience meaningful; busy people who want results from their efforts; anxious people who are groping for inner peace; devoted people who are searching for spiritual reality.

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### *Why We Worship*

Christian worship is the attitude and activity designed and employed to give expression to reverent respect for and adoration to the Eternal God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Christian worship is the act of seeking to relate the whole of life to God through adoration, confession, affirmation, and dedication.

The Christian worshiper seeks to lay hold upon that which is of lasting worth; that which is eternal, permanent, and invisible amidst all that is temporal, transient, and visible.

Christians perform acts of worship in the confidence that by this means they can discover and dedicate themselves to the most important things in life; the things which they cannot live without if they are to live life on the levels which they have come to believe God wants them to live.

Christians worship that they may quicken their consciences as they behold the holiness of God; to feed their minds with the truth of God; to experience God's cleansing, redeeming power of love in their hearts; to dedicate themselves more fully to the will of God.

The Christian worship service utilizes the great resources of music, such as musical instruments and voices, sacred literature, art forms, including architecture, paintings, and sculpture, as well as prayer

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and sermon in its attempt to help the worshiper experience these eternal values and make his dedication to them.

### *Worship "Service"*

The term "service" as used in the phrase, "worship service," springs from the biblical meaning of the term "servant." The worshipers or devotees of any god were his "servants." Worshiping people stood in awe and adoration in the presence of their "master"—God. They came seeking to discover God's desire and went forth to do his bidding. They exalted God, affirmed their confidence in him, acknowledged their dependence upon him and their responsibility to him. God alone was to be glorified.

In the Christian worship service the aim is fellowship with the God who has been revealed in Jesus Christ whom Christians hail as Saviour and Lord.

The Christian feels himself to be a "servant" of Christ, and in the worship service he exalts God and seeks to discover ways in which he may serve in the spirit of Jesus.

### *Attend or Participate?*

Because a "servant" is expected to do something which will acknowledge his serving relationship to his "master," the Christian worshiper discovers that

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if the worship service is to have any real meaning, he must do more than just "attend," in the sense that he is simply there physically.

Actually the English word "attend" stems from the Latin *tendere*, meaning to "stretch." It, therefore, means that we are to exercise our finest faculties. Thus, those who really enter into the worship experience must bring with them their whole beings —their minds, their hearts, their souls, as well as their bodies. They are in the presence of the Almighty to offer him praise and adoration, to ask his forgiveness, to plead for his mercy, to make petitions to him, and to pledge absolute allegiance to him from this time forth and forevermore. Worshipers come before the One to whom they owe their very lives, with a sense of joyous thankfulness for the privilege of being of service to him. This requires more than "attendance"; it demands "participation."

### *What Should Happen?*

When Christians worship, they should feel that they are doing something which lifts their quite ordinary lives into the realm of the extraordinary. Christian worship should provide inspiration of the quality which creates the inner glow of being a person of divine worth whose loftiest nature has the capacity to respond to the highest concepts of spiritual reality. Worship kindles a thirst for ideas and

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ideals which are beyond the present grasp of the worshiper. Browning was speaking of this when he declared that

. . . a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what's a Heaven for? <sup>1</sup>

Christian worship should elevate the spirit of the worshiper to such heights that he may catch a vision of the holiness of God to the degree that he is aware of his own unworthiness; of his need of God's cleansing, redeeming, strengthening power. Worship should provide such opportunities for this transforming power of God to be experienced by the worshiper that he ultimately feels impelled to accept the challenge which God lays upon him through the instruments of praise, the spoken Word, and, most of all, through the times of silent meditation when the spirit of man is overtaken by the Spirit of God.

As one who has breathed clean pure air after coming out of a dank prison feels new strength coursing through his veins, so one who has worshiped effectively feels new strength, new courage, and new hope surging through his whole life. Worship should provide the sense of "newness of life" which was felt by those who came near Jesus in the days of his flesh. Our spiritual blindness should give way to

<sup>1</sup> Robert Browning, "Andrea del Sarto."

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spiritual insight. Our deafness to the voice of God should be taken away until we hear his word of direction. Our moral illness should be healed as we hear him say, "Arise and walk"—walk out into the busy world and "be about my Father's business."

## **II**

### **PREPARATIONS FOR WORSHIP**

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Ps. 24:3-5

Christian worship might be likened to a journey. It is a process and an experience which is meant to lead us from where we are on our quest for God to an awareness of his presence.

Travelers should make adequate preparations for their journey. After having chosen their destination by answering the question, "Why and where are we

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going?" or as we have put it, "Why do we worship?" they should give serious consideration to the vital matters of personal physical, mental, and spiritual preparations.

### *Physical Preparations*

The Saturday night bath may have become one of the "relics" of a past era when modern facilities were not available to make more regular bathing convenient, but at least it symbolized a mother's determination to have so prepared her family for Sunday morning worship that they would be able to say, as they sat in the church, "We're all in our places with sunshiny faces." She knew that the Psalmist had said that those who entered into the presence of God were to have "clean hands," and she not only took this literally, but enlarged upon it. We may be sure that we should not only follow this directive to the extent that we strive for personal cleanliness, but that we should follow what was more likely the original intent of the ancient leader of worship and present to God hands that are dedicated to honest toil which contribute to the purposes of God.

We are familiar with the phrase "Sunday best" as it refers to the clothing which we wear when going to church. Knowing full well that God looks at the heart, rather than at outward appearance, we nonetheless recognize the importance of being well

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groomed and dressed in appropriate apparel. We are preparing to enter into the presence of the King of Kings, the Lord of hosts. Aware of the solemnity of the occasion, we shall strive to be dressed "properly." Protestant Christian worship does not generally require a particular type of apparel, although there are some standards of good taste. The clothing which one would feel to be appropriate in the living or dining room of a beloved friend will usually be perfectly acceptable. What would one be likely to wear when being presented to a respected public official?

Clean hands (remembering that "cleanliness is next to godliness"), appropriate apparel (our hair neatly combed and our shoes polished)—these fundamental physical preparations would likely be made before going to a home as a privileged guest. We are privileged guests of God as we worship in his house.

Physical preparation for Christian worship also challenges us to be "wide awake." It is too much to expect that one can really receive all that a worship service is intended to provide if he has not favored himself with adequate rest before the divine encounter. We realize that there are instances wherein people have to work at odd hours. There are also cases of emergency which interrupt our normal schedules. However, there are many who become so engrossed with the pursuit of pleasure on Saturday

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night that they literally wear themselves out, and therefore cannot expect to be alert at the Sunday morning worship service—if they manage to get there at all. It is queer that those who excuse themselves from various activities, both within and outside the church, by saying that they must get their rest to be able to do their work effectively the next day, do not feel any real responsibility to get adequate rest the night before the worship service so that they may be at their best for what is truly the most significant of all creative activity—the service to God.

Physical preparation is required if we are to “present ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice” unto God.

### *Mental Preparations*

If one is to receive the highest possible enjoyment from a Shakespearean drama or from an opera, he should prepare himself by reading the play or the libretto. Having become acquainted with the lines and the plot, he will not be likely to become bored, but will be able to share with the performers the real sense of the production.

In a real way a Christian worship service is a “drama,” and it is important that we acquaint ourselves with the “script” of this “drama”—the Holy Bible.

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We should know the "vocabulary" of the Christian faith. For example, when Christians use the word "God" they not only refer to the creator of the universe, or "the cosmic mind," or "the supreme architect," but to the eternal, loving, compassionate, personal being whom Jesus called "Father." Christian worshipers should know the New Testament record of the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They should be so familiar with the accounts of the parables and miracles of Jesus that even casual references will recall them. Familiarity with Old Testament stories and characters, as well as with the entire New Testament, provides the worshiper with foundations upon which to construct his own relationship to spiritual reality. Through reading the Bible and other works which are designed to provide us with religious truth, the worshiper becomes aware of the basic meanings of such terms as "sin," "forgiveness," "redemption," "salvation," "atonement," "grace," "faith," "hope," and "love." To fail to know the meaning of these terms as they are used in a Christian worship service is to leave one as much in the dark as to try to understand what an electrical engineer means when he uses the words "ohms," "watts," "volts," and other technical terms.

Mental preparation of an immediate sort is also required. We need to get into the "mood of worship" if we are to worship effectively. There are those who spend the time before the worship service reading the

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Sunday newspaper—from front page comics to back page want ads—and then wonder why they can't get their minds on what is going on in the service. Some businessmen admit to going to the office to pore over business problems before going to church. We may smile as we hear our fathers tell that when they were boys they were not allowed to so much as polish their shoes on Sunday mornings; that they were permitted only to do those essential chores which provided care for the livestock. We smile, too, when we are reminded that some religious people made all Sunday dinner preparations the day before. However, we must confess that the early Sunday morning activity in many homes in our time may well explain why some people do not get more than they do out of services of worship. While it may not be detrimental to scan the headlines, that one may be aware of what is going on in the world and in the immediate community, and while there may be a wholesomely creative value in making some last-minute personal and family preparations, blessed will be those individuals and families who so schedule their time as to provide for mental preparation for worship.

Sunday morning is often one of the few occasions when the entire family can get together for breakfast and morning devotions. Reading some devotional literature, including the Bible, offering prayer which expresses gratitude for the privilege of worship which

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awaits those who shall meet together in the House of Prayer, and petitions for the experience of God's presence in their lives, will set the mental mood for effective worship.

### *Spiritual Preparations*

The mental preparations for worship, as we have implied, include spiritual preparations, for the two are inseparably related. Bearing in mind that we are about to enter into the presence of God, and mindful that he requires not only "clean hands," but a "pure heart," we are faced with the necessity of turning our minds, our hearts, and our souls, as well as our bodies, toward the church as we prepare to worship. While the devout Christian will not limit spiritual contemplation to Sunday, it is well that he make as definite plans in his mind and heart for what he hopes to accomplish on this sacred day as he makes when he starts his working day. Every day is a day which God has made, but how appropriate that on the Sabbath one says aloud, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24).

At some time during the preparations for worship one should find opportunity to be alone. For some this may only be as they are making physical preparations for the day. In any case it can become a time for reviewing one's relationships with God and with other

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people during the past week. It is a time for taking spiritual inventory.

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord" (Ps. 92:1), and this should not be limited to public worship, but be a part of our private devotional pattern. To express gratitude helps us to become mindful that life is fundamentally good, however great may be the difficulties we must face.

Reviewing the experiences of the past week may bring to remembrance some things of which we are not proud. We should now privately confess our sins and ask God's forgiveness. We may see before our mind's eye some of the people we have hurt, or who may have hurt us, and may feel the need to set things right with them before we go to the altar. It may be too late before church to really set things right between our neighbor and ourselves, but we need to really forgive them, or ask God to forgive us, and make the resolve that as soon as possible we are going to straighten out this tormenting situation. These are but suggestions as to the type of spiritual exercise one should take in order to be spiritually prepared to receive the "blessing from the Lord."

It is highly desirable that the entire family become aware that this is a day set aside for emphasis upon spiritual values. In those instances where it proves difficult, if not impossible, to follow through with the kind of mental and spiritual preparations which

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we have suggested, at least there can be a Christian atmosphere.

Recordings can serve a helpful function in this regard. Fine organ music, choir and quartette numbers, as well as solos, which flood the home with joyous spiritual music can be a most creatively helpful spiritual preparation for worship. Many good religious radio programs are often available, as well as religious television programs. While this cannot be expected to take the place of personal and family participation in the singing of such music or personal or family devotions, it serves to set the "mood," to get people to thinking on spiritual matters, setting their "affection on things above."

The "way" we go to church as individuals and as families can make a tremendous difference in the effectiveness of the worship experience. If every member of the family has shouldered his share of responsibility for the preparations, if all are ready at the designated time for departure, and if the conversation is happy, it is likely that we will be in a "good mood" when we get to church. Let there be eager anticipation on the part of everyone. Let us recall once again that we are on our way to a place where we are to be "guests of God," and guests should bring with them their very best "moods" as well as their very best "company" manners. This combination of attitudes is vital to the spiritual preparation for worship.

Having made adequate physical, mental, and

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spiritual preparations, we are ready to enter into an experience which can be life-transforming.

### *Preparations Made for the Worshiper*

While we have been making our own physical, mental, and spiritual preparations for worship, many other people have been making preparations.

The custodian (sexton or janitor) has been making ready the house of God. He, too, knows that "cleanliness is next to godliness." He strives to have the place of worship thoroughly cleaned, well lighted, and at a comfortable temperature. Having come to a clear understanding of what is expected of him by the "house committee" or others in charge of the care of the church, as well as the wishes of the minister and others who lead the worship service, he will make every possible effort to have this sacred place prepared at all times for the experience wherein the soul of man seeks to be lifted into the presence of the eternal One.

The ushers have not only made those physical, mental, and spiritual preparations which other worshipers have made, but have arrived at the church in time to perform their sacred function.

Men of high moral character who are dedicated to this sacred responsibility, the ushers show by their appearance that they have prepared for their work. Neatly and appropriately dressed, their manner re-

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veals that they have made mental and spiritual preparations which will enable them to contribute to the spiritual strengthening of the people who come to worship.

In most instances the ushers work so effectively that many worshipers are unaware of the "mechanics" which they have observed before the service or are carrying out during it. Under the leadership of the chairman of the ushering staff and the head usher, the ushers have arrived well before the scheduled time for worship. They have made sure that everything is in readiness for this great event when the spirits of people seek communion with the Spirit of God. Provided with bulletins which contain the order of service, the usher stands ready to guide the worshipers to their seats before the formal worship service begins and at the particularly designated times when seating will not endanger the worship experience of those who have arrived in time to avail themselves of the full potential of the service. He extends to the people a sincere greeting, but is aware that this is a service of divine worship, and not an auction sale or a political rally, and therefore avoids saying or doing anything which would distract the worshipers or distract from the desired atmosphere of reverence which should prevail in the house of the Lord.

As we shall observe when seeking to come into a clearer understanding of the meaning of each particular element of the order of service, genuine

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preparations have also been made by many others. The organist, or pianist, the members of the choir, and the minister(s) have been preparing, in a sense, all their lives for this appointment of people with God. Many hours have been spent in the specific preparations for this particular service. Careful selection has been made of numbers to be played during the time of the Prelude and Postlude. A number of hours have been spent in choir rehearsal. Many preachers spend at least one hour of specific preparation for each minute of the sermon's delivery. Each item in the order of service has been carefully selected—hymns, anthems, scripture, responsive readings, and prayers. While these preparations are not always in evidence (in fact, the lack of such preparation may, unfortunately, be much more evident), we nonetheless should be aware that in a well-ordered church these matters will have been given serious consideration. For this reason we may approach the church with the earnest expectation that something truly wonderful and inspiring is about to take place as we participate in this service of worship.

### **III**

## **OUR FATHERS WORSHIPED**

The present-day worshiper should be aware that he is engaging in one of the oldest and most universal of pursuits and experiences. One may take his choice of almost any period of history or any geographical location and, by making comparisons of the behavior of people of widely separated cultures, discover that some form of worship was the one particular thing which they had in common.

Of particular interest to the Christian worshiper is the fact that as early as 2500 B.C. our religious forebears, the Hebrews, were setting up altars and making covenants with the deity which we now worship as the one true God of all mankind, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Throughout the long history of the Hebrew people definite rites and ceremonies were developed, with accompanying rituals, which used prescribed words

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and actions to express man's inner convictions. Sacrificial offerings, prayers, psalms, feasts, and observances of special days combined to make religious worship elaborate and, in some instances, laborious in the days when Jesus was a youth.

### *Early Christian Worship*

Born within Judaism, Christianity naturally developed its liturgical life within the context of its Jewish heritage. The earliest Christians, according to Acts 2:46, "day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, . . . partook of food with glad and generous hearts." From this we are to assume that what was distinctive to Christianity was its communal meal, while for the rest it continued to observe the Jewish modes of public and private worship (Acts 5:42). Soon, however, the cleavage between Judaism and Christianity became complete; and, forbidden access to temple and synagogue, the Christians developed their independent services. Central to these were baptism and the Lord's Supper, with many other acts of worship clustered around.<sup>1</sup>

Worship in the great, beautiful Temple in Jerusalem was very elaborate compared to that carried on in the synagogues which were located in practically every community where Jews were found. The function of the synagogue was to enable peo-

<sup>1</sup> "Worship in New Testament Times, Christian," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962).

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ple to hear the Holy Scriptures read and expounded, particularly the Law. Accompanying this central act of Jewish worship were acts of singing and the offering of prayers. Apparently, the elaborate Temple worship influenced synagogue worship so slightly that when the Temple was destroyed, forty years after the Crucifixion, it was not greatly missed by those not belonging to the priestly class. So it was that Christianity inherited the simple forms of worship which for many generations had been known in the synagogues. This involved reading the scriptures, singing, praying, and what is now known as "the sermon," or the exposition of the scriptures.

To this ancient procedure, or order of worship, the Christians came to add a confession of faith which affirmed their belief in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. At first this confession of faith was not stereotyped. That did not come until the early part of the fourth century when creeds became a commonly fixed element of the worship procedure. Actually, almsgiving, or the offering for the work of the church and the care of the poor, bears an earlier date in the history of Christian worship than any creeds.

As we have observed, that which gave distinction to the Christian order of worship was the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It grew from a common meal, and the repetition of the simple words of institution which Jesus uttered, "This do in remem-

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brance of me." This procedure became a definite center around which Christian worship revolved as participants recalled their Lord's death and resurrection, offered prayers of intercession, recited the prayer which Jesus had taught his disciples, which we know as "The Lord's Prayer," and adapted earlier Jewish hymns to their new-found faith.

### *Early Christian Churches*

We are aware that as persecution of the Christians developed, they often met in secret, sometimes in homes and not infrequently in caves used for burial places, known as the catacombs. Evidently during the days of the apostle Paul there were public services of worship held in many cities in places formally known as churches. However, it is speculated by some that it was not until Christianity was legalized by Emperor Constantine, in his Edict of Milan in the year 313, that there came to be any distinct type of church architecture in the form of buildings set apart for the specific purpose of Christian worship.

With this legalized status the Christians of the early fourth century undertook to build places for worship which would give a central place to that which had become the distinctive mark of Christian worship—the Lord's Supper. Studies in early church architecture show that a table, or altar, which held the elements of the Sacrament, became, as it remains

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today in a majority of places of Christian worship, the focal point for the liturgical services which continued those customs which characterized the earliest procedures of Christian fellowship—the reading of the Holy Scriptures, the singing of psalms, the reciting of prayers and creeds, and the exposition of the word of God.

### *The Place of Worship*

As soon as the Christians began to build churches, they started to introduce various art forms. Crosses and paintings, as well as statues and icons, as found in profusion in both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches to this day, may be traced to these early Christian centuries. As arts and crafts developed, plain glass windows gave way to stained glass, which, in various combinations of art forms, served to create a mood of worship and portray great facts relative to the Christian tradition.

During the Protestant Reformation, beginning in the sixteenth century, there was a revolt against the formalism which some were convinced to be ruinous to the real life and mission of the Church. In their zeal for a return to what they considered to be fundamentals of faith and practice, the Protestants removed most of the art forms from their places of worship—often with erratic disregard for their tangible, as well as intangible, values. Priceless paintings,

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stained-glass windows, and pieces of sculpture were sometimes wantonly destroyed, and worshipers were often left with not so much as a cross to symbolize their heritage and indebtedness to the past or to provide them with visible aids to worship.

Time has mellowed judgment on this subject, and many Protestant Christian worshipers have come to appreciate that signs and symbols can serve a very useful purpose for the worshiper who allows them to bring great spiritual truth to his remembrance. It has been discovered that we need not worship an object to permit it to lead us into the deeper experience which worship is meant to produce.

Each Protestant denomination and individual congregation often has peculiar objectives in worship which invariably become evident in the well-executed place of worship. While the pulpit holds a dominant place in the Protestant tradition, and, therefore, is often located in a foremost position in Protestant churches, recently there has been a tendency to return to the earlier Christian custom of placing the altar or Communion table as the focal point of Protestant Christian worship. In most cases where this is done, the pulpit is located on the congregation's left, while a lectern holding the Holy Scriptures is on the congregation's right. In some churches the altar or Communion table is located in such a position as to enable those administering the Sacrament to stand, and sometimes sit, behind it, and in some in-

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stances those who receive the elements kneel around this altar or "Lord's table." Although this place which holds the elements of the Sacrament may be on the "floor level," rather than on a raised platform in what is designated strictly as "the sanctuary," and whether or not the communicants are served while seated in the pews or kneeling, either at the altar itself or at a chancel or communion rail, there is, in most Protestant churches, some visible, tangible evidence that, like the first Christian worshipers, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is observed by the worshipers. Even though it may be served only quarterly, it continues to characterize Christian worship and to bring to remembrance the significance of Christian faith.

The baptismal font is also one of the usual identifying fixtures of a place of Christian worship. In some Protestant churches it is located near the entrance, symbolizing the initial act in the life of the person who is to experience Christian relationship. In other churches the font is often located outside the chancel rail which separates the "nave," or main seating area for the congregation, from the "sanctuary," where the worship service is conducted. Churches not following liturgical forms may locate the font inside this railing. Those churches which adhere to the "immersion" form of baptism often have the place for baptism under, or behind, the platform

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which holds the pulpit and other articles of furniture.

The altar or Communion table, the baptismal font or baptistry, the pulpit and perhaps a lectern, together with the cross and lighted tapers which symbolize Christ as the Light of the world—these are things to look for in a place set aside for Christian worship. While not all of these articles may be in all places of Protestant worship, they are considered quite essential in most churches. Depending upon the tastes of the denomination or individual congregation, various signs and symbols are often added to these basic items. These may include altar, pulpit, and lectern hangings often carrying Christian signs and symbols and in colors which are assigned to particular days or seasons. Flowers on the altar or near it add beauty and dignity to the place of worship.

It is into this place, which is furnished with things which have historical significance, as well as contemporary usefulness, that we enter to worship in the tradition of our fathers.

As we worship, it is helpful to recall that we are joining in an "endless line of splendor" made up of those who have passed through centuries of change, but have always kept loyal to the principle that certain particularly prescribed procedures and definite, well-appointed places can best promote the worship experience. In varying degrees we re-enact procedures amidst surroundings which are in some

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way similar to those enjoyed by generations of worshiping Christians. As we enter the place of worship, we are stepping across a threshold which takes us into the past, the present, and the future to become aware of the greatness, the beauty, the majesty, the power, and the ever-present love of God.

## IV

### ORDERS OF WORSHIP

Orders of worship, like individual people, come in a wide variety of "sizes and shapes." This undoubtedly stems from our Protestant tenet of the right of private judgment.

As we seek here to give a guide to Protestant worship, we are not concerned with a particular form being adopted or that agreement be reached regarding the ultimate meaning of each separate act of worship. Rather we shall hope to suggest ways by which the worshiper can get the highest possible experience of value as he participates in the order of service which is being conducted. An examination of the orders of worship used in many different Protestant churches reveals that they usually have certain elements in common. What should the worshiper do when these "acts" are being led or performed? What is the background of this element in

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the service? What should one expect to happen in his heart while this is going on; what is the reason for it?

Assuming that we are interested in worshiping with dignity and that we are following an order which has been thought through with some definite purposes in mind, let us also assume that we are provided with a bulletin which carries the order of service. (This is often the case even when a prayer book or book of worship is provided for use.)

### *Time of Worship*

It is always considered a matter of good taste for "guests" to arrive some time ahead of the announced hour of an engagement or appointment. Thoughtful guests never arrive late for a dinner unless they have been detained by some unavoidable emergency. It is well, too, that worshipers arrive prior to the stated hour. Not only will they be more likely to be seated according to their preference, but more importantly they will have entered the place of worship in time to take advantage of the opportunities for worship preparation which are provided by the "worship atmosphere"—contributed by the architecture, the altar "appointments" (such as cross, candles, and flowers), the "hangings" on the altar, pulpit and lectern, the beauty of the windows, paintings and/or other art works.

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### *Let Us Keep Silent*

If we have adequately prepared ourselves for the worship experience, we will be uniquely conscious of why we are in this sacred place. We have come for a sacred tryst with God. While we will give an appropriate greeting to other worshipers, we will refrain from even whispered conversation until after the divine appointment has concluded. The earnest worshiper will be aware that while he may feel tempted to convey greetings, news, or comments to other worshipers, there is the good possibility that they or those nearby will be disturbed by such behavior. Positively stated, it is good worship behavior only to speak to God during the worship service. We do this through prayers, readings, and song.

It is on this account that at the top of bulletins used in many worship services there appear phrases such as these:

The Lord is in His holy temple:  
Let all the earth keep silence before Him.

Or

Keep silence, friend, for some have come—  
To cast their care on God today,  
And some to praise from thankful hearts—  
And some "Thy Kingdom Come" to pray.  
Keep silence; and let him speak anew—  
To every heart—perhaps to you!

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The phrase may be, "Let each one, upon entering his pew, bow his head in a brief period of silent prayer and meditation." Such notices serve to remind the worshiper that the service should begin for him the moment he crosses the outer threshold of the place where this service is to be held. The opportunity to experience the Divine Presence has begun for him and for those already assembled, because "Surely the Lord is in this place; . . . this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Gen. 28:16, 17.)

### *The Organ Prelude*

Technically, the order of worship begins with the first note of the Organ Prelude. In many churches the organist starts playing some time (often fifteen minutes) before the designated hour of worship. This is not an organ recital, nor is the organ music meant to "cover up" the inevitable disturbance created while people are being seated by the ushers. Neither is the Organ Prelude something to be "overcome" by those who persist in using this period for conversations, however whispered. (Some people have become quite embarrassed when an unexpected "rest" occurred in the music, making their conversation most noticeable.)

The Organ Prelude is meant to help the worshiper make the transition from the world of the transient

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and temporal to the world of the eternal and spiritual. It can be a means by which we are led into the reality of the invisible. It provides a time to pray and meditate, to read the order of service and the church notices, as well as to find the place in the hymnal in order to be ready to join in the significant acts of corporate worship. In churches where candles are used at the focal point of worship, it is during the closing moment of the Organ Prelude that they are lighted, symbolizing the presence of him who is the Light of the world.

### *Call to Worship*

Depending upon the traditions of the particular denomination or local church, the first words spoken or sung at the beginning of the order of service may vary considerably.

The purpose of this act of worship is to herald the good news that the act of corporate worship, with definite words and actions, is about to begin. These are the first words which should be uttered by anyone during the service. During this act of worship, at whatever point it appears, the worshiper should maintain a reverent silence, allowing the service to actually start working its transforming effect upon him. What the Organ Prelude sought to do by way of creating a "worshipful atmosphere" for all who are assembled, the Call to Worship or Introit

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seeks to do in a more definite and personal way as it arrests our attention, centering our thoughts on the one thing which is before us—the worship of God.

### *The Opening Hymn* (Processional Hymn)

Congregational singing of hymns is one of the most distinguishing marks of Protestant worship. Since the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the sixteenth century, there has been an emphasis upon this means of acknowledging praise, thanksgiving, and faith, expressing penitence, making petition, and offering dedication. Adapting psalms, theological concepts, and poetry to singable tunes which were often borrowed from secular as well as classical music, the early Protestant groups, represented by Luther and Calvin, encouraged participation of the congregation in the musical portions of the order of worship. The Wesleys popularized the use of hymns wherever they went. American Protestantism has contributed generously to our rich store of hymns in addition to adding the gospel songs which are intensely personal in their feeling as they deal largely with essential values of Christian faith and experience. From the large collection of hymns and gospel songs those who plan and con-

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duct worship services may make selections which will contribute to specific objective of a particular act in the total sequence of the worship experience. Like the variety of "cards for all occasions" which are available, there are "hymns for all occasions," and the well-planned worship service involves thoughtful selection.

The Opening Hymn, whether or not it is a processional, should express adoration and praise and stimulate a lively interest in this particular service of worship. It is obvious that if this is a special day, such as Christmas or Easter, hymns conveying that specific message will be chosen. Those churches following the Christian calendar<sup>1</sup> will most likely be using hymns which make those particular emphases. When the people are to stand and begin singing, it will probably be indicated on the bulletin, or by some sign from those conducting the service. At that designated time let all who are present lift their voices. Giving careful attention to the words we are uttering, and allowing the "lift" of the experience to lay hold upon us, we save ourselves from just being "attenders" and become "participants" in the service of worship. However "weary and heavy laden" we may be, however filled with doubt or anxiety, however great may be the problems which we know we must face upon leaving this place, we are now

<sup>1</sup> See Christian Year and Glossary, pp. 60-64.

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given the glorious privilege of having mind, heart, soul, and strength captivated by an act of worship which holds great potential in terms of transforming all of life. To fail to join in this Opening Hymn and the other hymns is to deny ourselves one of the great opportunities for a creative worship experience.

If the Opening Hymn is used as a Processional, it not only serves the purpose we have just suggested, but also is a medium by which the choir and clergy approach the worship center. Symbolically, the worship center represents "the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16). It is the focal point for the attention of all worshipers. There will be found the "altar" or Communion table, which if not being used at this service to hold the elements of the Sacrament, most likely holds or is flanked by candles and flowers. Somewhere near it (on it, or someplace above it) may be a cross or other notable Christian symbol. In some churches it is the custom to have the opened Holy Bible resting on this piece of furniture, which is or supports the visible reminder of that which is paramount to our faith. Near this "worship center" those who are to lead in the service—the minister(s) and choir(s)—take their appointed places.

Denominational traditions, local church customs, as well as individual tastes on the part of the leaders of worship, combine with the architectural oppor-

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tunities and limitations of the place of worship to determine exactly what is the most feasible and effective procedure to be followed in many acts of worship. It is safe to suggest, however, that the basic attitudes of reverence and dignity—coupled with an earnest effort to secure for one's self and assist others in securing the maximum results from the quest for the experience of the presence of God—will find everyone giving his very best resources to this corporate endeavor.

### *Call to Worship*

Unless the Opening or Processional Hymn has been preceded by some type of Call to Worship, this act of worship comes at this time. It may take the form of scripture sentences, either declared by the minister alone or read responsively by the minister and the people. In some instances a Choral Introit sung by the choir before the Processional Hymn is supplemented by a spoken, responsive Call to Worship after the Processional, the people remaining in a standing position. The order of worship will then be as follows:

Organ Prelude

Choral Introit      (*sung by the choir*)

Processional Hymn

Call to Worship      (*spoken responsively*)

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### *The Gloria Patri*

It is appropriate to follow this with the singing of the Gloria Patri ("Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.")

As we join in the Gloria Patri, we are participating in an act of worship which dates back to the earliest days of Christian worship. It probably was one of the first distinctly Christian recitals of faith. While in the early church it was sung by the priest alone, Protestant worship today encourages congregational participation.

### *Unison Prayer*

Unison prayer like unison singing helps the worshipers express their individual and collective adoration, confession, affirmation, and dedication. As in most matters pertaining to Protestant worship, one will find many different types of prayer set at particular points of the various worship services. It is generally true, however, that very shortly after the first hymn the people are invited to unite in some kind of prayer. If it is called an Invocation, it is meant to do what the word "invocation" implies—namely, to invoke or ask for God's blessing upon the people who have assembled. It may be designated

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as a Collect because it is meant to be said in unison by the minister and congregation. It is a "collective" act of worship. Invocations generally emphasize the acknowledgment of adoration and praise, in addition to making petitions for what the worshipers hope to experience in the service. Collects often are characterized by their mention of a particular petition, as "A Collect for Purity of Heart" or for some particular occasion, such as "A Collect for Easter Day." In some instances a Prayer of Confession is offered in unison at this early point of the service. This may be followed by a period of Silent Meditation, and then Words of Forgiveness, Assurance of Pardon, or a Prayer of Absolution by the minister. It is not uncommon for the Lord's Prayer to follow these acts of worship.

It is customary in many churches for the people to be seated during the recitation of these opening prayers. Some churches provide kneeling boards or racks to encourage that posture at this time.

### *Affirmation of Faith*

If an Affirmation of Faith is used in the service, it may be recited in unison now or after the Anthem. Whenever it comes in the service, it serves both to review the principles which have held Christians together since apostolic times and to review the beliefs which Christians today hold paramount. It is

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not uncommon for the Affirmation of Faith to be followed by the singing of the Gloria Patri.

### *Scripture Reading*

As noted at the outset of this guide to Protestant worship, one of the principal practices which Christianity inherited from ancient Judaism was that of reading the Holy Scriptures. It confronts the worshiper with the word of God. Unfortunately, this is one of the few occasions when many people hear what the eternal God has to say to them, for personal and family Bible reading is not one of those customs which is today considered indispensable to effective personal and family living. In liturgical churches there are prescribed lessons to be read on particular occasions, usually from both the Old and New Testaments, or from the Gospels and the Epistles. Responsive Readings from both of the Testaments provide creative opportunities for congregational participation in this act of worship, which is also an act of learning.

Usually the Scripture Reading, given by the minister, contains the reference which is to be emphasized in the Sermon. Familiarity with the Holy Scriptures, as fostered by personal and family Bible reading, will serve to make this act of worship increasingly meaningful.

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### *The Sursum Corda*

While the very term "Sursum Corda" may be strange to some Protestant worshipers, it is one of the oldest parts of Christian church liturgy and is used today in many churches which do not adhere to strict formality, as well as in the "liturgical" churches. Very early in the history of the church it was used as the introduction to the Prayer of Consecration of the Sacrament. Like the "Salutation," which is often used today in many churches as an introduction to the Invocation or Collect ("The Lord be with you," being spoken by the minister, and the response, "And with thy spirit," given by the people), the Sursum Corda was a usual greeting exchanged by early Christians when they met. Later it became a rubric to be used while the clergy went from the lectern, where the Scriptures were read, to the place where the Pastoral Prayer was to be offered. For the Sursum Corda, the minister or some member of the choir chants, "Lift up your hearts," and the entire congregation is invited to join with the choir in the response, "We lift them up unto the Lord." He chants, "Let us give thanks unto the Lord," and the reply comes, "It is meet and right so to do." This is meant to guide the worshipers into a period of meditation to be directed by the one who is to offer the Pastoral Prayer.

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### *The Pastoral Prayer*

The Pastoral Prayer is not simply a time when the minister offers his personal prayers in public. It is a time when he seeks to voice the adorations, confessions, thanksgivings, intercessions, petitions, and dedications of all who have assembled to experience the presence of God. Offered from a heart that seeks to know the mind of the people for whom he is serving as a priest, and also a heart that is committed to discovering and proclaiming the mind of God, whose servant he is, and to whom the prayers are offered, the Pastoral Prayer deserves the same quality of preparation and delivery on the part of the one who delivers it that is given to the preparation and delivery of the Sermon. It also deserves the same reverent attention on the part of the worshipers which they give to the Sermon. In fact it deserves more consideration on the part of both the leader of worship and the worshiper, for it is addressed not to the people, as is the Sermon, but to God. It is for this reason that many ministers write out their Pastoral Prayers, carefully selecting each word and phrase and making a supreme effort to see to it that this becomes a time of great spiritual enrichment for all worshipers.

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### *Notices or Announcements*

Unless the Notices or Announcements have been given just before the Scripture Reading, they usually are given immediately before the receiving of the Offering. While some churches follow the custom of receiving the Offering after the Sermon, for purposes of guiding the worshiper as to the meaning of this "act," we describe it here.

There are those who object to having oral announcements made in a service of worship. While they may sometimes be, or appear to be, unnecessary and extraneous, we need to consider that corporate worship is but one act of adoration and homage which Christian people are called upon to make to show their love for, and dedication to, God. In this light it becomes evident that it is essential to use every chance to encourage participation in all of the opportunities for spiritual enrichment. Sometimes people are as deeply enriched in terms of Christian fellowship at a church supper as they are while singing a tenth-century chant. Whenever people are drawn together under Christian auspices, there they have an opportunity to feel the presence of God. Likewise, it is essential that all who profess their faith in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man be repeatedly urged to enter into challenging opportunities for learning, fellowship, and service. Moreover, if we believe what we often say about our

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stewardship of all of life and goods, it becomes the responsibility of the leaders of a congregation to urge active participation in the support of the church financially as well as by dedicated service which finds people assuming responsibilities of leadership.

### *The Offering*

The Offering is much more than "taking the collection." It is a time when the worshipers make a tangible acknowledgment of their conviction that God is the sovereign owner of all things, that man is a steward, and that God's ownership and man's stewardship ought to be acknowledged through regular and systematic giving to Christ's Church.

As the ushers come forward to prepare to take up the Offering, the worshipers in many churches are invited to join the choir in singing an acknowledgment of the principle of stewardship, such as:

We give thee but Thine own,  
Whate'er the gift may be:  
All that we have is Thine alone,  
A trust, O Lord, from Thee.

In some churches the minister offers a prayer at this time. Later, as the Offering is being taken to the worship center, it is customary in some churches for the congregation to stand as the ushers come forward and join in singing the Doxology. In some instances

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a prayer of dedication is made by the minister as the offerings are presented. The Doxology, like other commonly used "responses," is an act of praise, giving us an opportunity to acknowledge God as the "giver of every good and perfect gift."

### *Anthem*

Our present word "choir" comes from the old Latin term *quire*, which referred to that part of the church allotted to the singers. They had certain "quire officers." In addition to leading in the singing of hymns, the choir has traditionally had responsibility for offering antiphonal psalms, canticles, versicles, and responses. Drawing upon great biblical texts, or other portions of sacred literature which have been set to music, the Anthem is a corporate act of worship entered into by those who have dedicated themselves to this sacred responsibility for leading in the offering of homage and adoration to God.

The behavior of those who perform this sacred office of praise, thanksgiving, affirmation, and dedication on behalf of the worshipers is one of the most distinctive of all factors contributing to an effective worship experience. Carefully selected anthems, appropriate to the occasion, within the capabilities of the musicians, and adequately prepared, help the wor-

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shiper to become aware of the value of music as a part of worship.

### *The Hymn of Preparation*

If the people stand to sing the Doxology as the Offering is being presented before the Sermon, it is appropriate that a Hymn of Preparation be sung at this time. The Hymn of Preparation should accomplish just what its designation implies—prepare us for the Sermon. At this point in the worship service those who choose the hymns need have no thought of the meter or tempo, as becomes essential when choosing processional and recessional hymns which will be reasonably easy for the choir and clergy to follow in their march. We can concentrate almost entirely upon the words of the hymns. In most instances it will express, in its own distinctive way, the emphasis which is to be made in the Sermon.

### *The Sermon*

The Sermon is not distinctive to Protestant worship, although traditionally it characterizes Protestant worship more than other types of worship. It dates back to those earliest times when opportunities were provided for the exposition of the scriptures, for giving prophecies or warnings, or generally imparting information as well as inspiration.

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The Sermon should serve to inform and inspire as it strives to relate the eternal truth of God to the everyday experiences of the worshiper. While it should be interesting, it is not meant to be entertaining so that the only comment one feels impelled to make afterward is that he "enjoyed" it. Probably it will have best fulfilled its function if it draws a comment similar to that offered by King Louis XV after hearing his court preacher, Massillon. He said, "I have heard many great preachers in my day, and have been satisfied with them all, but when I hear you preach, I am dissatisfied with myself." On the other hand, the Sermon should send us forth with new insights into the meaning of the Christian life and possessed with a fresh awareness of the availability of the resources which God is ready to provide those who "worship him in spirit and in truth." Above all, any discussion presented in the Sermon should prompt us to want to make a decision. We should find ourselves asking, "Now that I have heard, what am I to do?" Having had avenues of thought opened which prompt our deepest nature to act in accord with what has been defined as the will of God, we should feel impelled to make a fresh dedication. Hearing about the great love of God as portrayed in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we should find ourselves saying:

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Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

To receive the most from the Sermon requires that one be receptive and attentive. What we have suggested earlier, as we considered the behavior which is appropriate upon entering the place of worship, might well be reviewed. The worshiper should maintain silence, not simply out of respect for the one giving the Sermon, but for the benefit of other worshipers, as well as his own enrichment. While he has every right to be critical, let him keep an open mind and heart. Expecting to hear something which will give him clearer understanding of the great truths of the Christian faith, he will cling to every word and allow it to take root in the deep recesses of his soul.

### *Dedication*

In some churches it is the custom to have a time of dedication which takes the form of an "altar call," when those who desire to make a commitment, or recommitment, to Christ go forward and kneel at the chancel rail. In many churches moments of prayer follow the Sermon. Whether or not these customs are followed, there is usually a Hymn of Dedication following the sermon period. In some instances it serves as a Recessional Hymn. In any

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case it is meant to put a golden cap on all that has transpired since first we entered this place. Carefully chosen for its message, which has been set to music, it seeks to reinforce the dedication which was encouraged by the sermon. It is essential that we enter into the mood of this hymn. If it calls for quiet consecration, let us employ that quality of emotion. If it calls for enthusiastic, perhaps militant, dedication to some cause, the worshiper should proclaim that feeling.

### *Benediction*

It is customary in many churches for the worshipers to be seated during the Benediction. Stilling our hearts and minds and souls, we await the words which voice the ancient prayer that the blessing of the love of God the Father, the grace of Christ his Son and the continuing sense of the Holy Spirit's presence may be upon and remain with us all now and forevermore.

### *Dismissal*

It is sometimes customary for the choir, and on occasion the congregation, to sing some appropriate hymn or a "choral amen" at this time. It is meant to encourage the experience of the abiding presence upon which we have sought to lay hold. If the candles at

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the worship center have been lighted before the service by designated persons, known as acolytes, it is usually during this time that these persons extinguish the lights. In some churches dismissal chimes are played at this time. These final acts are signals that the formal service of worship is over, and we are free to rise and go forth as creatures who have been strengthened by the Spirit's favor.

### *Organ Postlude*

The Organ Postlude sends us forth with joy in our hearts. Unfortunately, it is not often that we really hear this rendition by the organist, for we are, perhaps rightly, so intent on greeting our fellow-worshipers. As the Organ Prelude at the beginning of the Service should quietly proclaim that we are entering into the presence of God, so now the Postlude may with more volume (but without literally "blowing people out of the church") proclaim that we are going out into the busy world again and should, therefore, put notes of gladness and confidence in our hearts.

# V

## WE HAVE WORSHIPED

When we worship we are engaging in both a science and an art. It is a science in that like all sciences it employs particular instruments, in this case definite words and actions which deserve to be used in correct proportion and with ordered procedure if the desired result is to be achieved. It is an art in that it employs tangible means to attain intangible goals. Like all art it requires artists to create it. Genuine, satisfying, corporate worship experience deserves the very best devotion of those who would join in creating the highest possible degree of effectiveness for all who worship together. It is not something which we can simply "observe." It requires active participation. As worshipers, custodians, ushers, choir members, and clergy devote to God their individual resources for this one common objective of expressing their homage and adora-

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tion as they assemble in the presence of God, great worship experience may be expected to result.

There is an invitation which hangs outside of Toynbee Hall in London which most adequately expresses our deepest reason for worshiping and the goal which we may seek to attain. It reads:

Your lives are busy, useful, honest; but your faces are anxious, and you are not all you want to be. There is within you another life, a buried life, which does not get free. When it really hears God's voice it will arise. I doubt that this life will be stirred by excitement. I believe that in the quiet of a place full of good memories, in the sound of fine music, in the sympathy of fellow-seekers, you may better wait God's call. It may be that as you listen to the silence, to the music, or to the worship of others, God will speak, and the buried life will arise, and that you will have peace.

## THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

Protestant worship may be well ordered by the observance of the time-honored Christian calendar and the use of the liturgical colors on the altar, pulpit, lectern, and ministerial stole.

ADVENT	Sunday nearest St. Andrew's Day, November 30, through Christmas Eve. Preparation for the Nativity. <i>Color:</i> Violet (purple), symbolic of preparation and penitence, watching and discipline, suffering and passion.
CHRISTMASTIDE	December 25 to Twelfth Night (January 5). <i>Color:</i> White, symbolic of purity, joy, and holiness—used through first Sunday of Epiphany.
EPIPHANYTIDE	January 6 to day before Ash Wednesday. The coming of the Wise Men. <i>Color:</i> White used on first Sunday, then green to symbolize the growing church and spread of gospel. Used until first Sunday of Lent.
LENT	Begins on Ash Wednesday—forty-six days before Easter. Penitential season. <i>Color:</i> Violet (purple). Used through Maundy Thursday. Black used on Good Friday (or no color), symbolic of depths of sorrow.

## THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

### EASTERTIDE

Easter Sunday is first Sunday after first full moon after twenty-first of March. Joyous resurrection season celebrated for forty-nine days.

*Color:* White.

### PENTECOST

(Whitsuntide). Seventh Sunday after Easter, observing the "coming of the Holy Spirit" and the "birth of the Church."

*Color:* Red used on Pentecost Sunday. White used on Trinity Sunday, which is first Sunday after Pentecost, then red for the remainder of Pentecost. Red symbolizes blood, fire, and Christian zeal.

### KINGDOMTIDE

(Always the last Sunday in August, which is the "Festival of Christ the King.") Season celebrating the kingdom of God on earth.

*Color:* White on first Sunday; green for the following five Sundays—symbolic of growth.

White is used on Communion Sundays. World-wide Communion Sunday is observed on the first Sunday in October. Green is used on the remaining Sundays of Kingdomtide—to first Sunday of Advent. (White is also used at weddings, baptisms, and on Thanksgiving Day.)

## **GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED TERMS\***

**Altar**—The retable and the communion table may be properly referred to as the altar, which is the center of worship in all evangelical churches.

**Chancel**—The portion of a church immediately in front of the congregation containing an elevated altar, pulpit, lectern, and the choir stalls.

**Chancel screen**—A screen separating the chancel at the floor level from the remainder of the church.

**Church year**—A twelve-month recapitulation of the significant events in the life of Christ and the Christian Church. Also referred to as "The Christian Year."

**Communion**—One of the names given the ordinance or sacrament observed in different forms by nearly all Christian sects in remembrance of the Saviourhood of Christ. It is also called the Lord's Supper, because instituted by him.

**Communion table**—A raised structure of stone or wood, within the chancel, on which are usually placed the vessels and elements used during administration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

**Creed (Credo)**—A confession of faith. A form or summary of the fundamental points of religious belief.

**Doxology**—A short formula of praise to God. E.g., "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow."

**Font**—The container for the water of baptism.

**Gloria Tibi**—The doxology "Glory Be to Thee, O Lord."

\* Adapted from *Music and Worship in the Church*, Lovelace-Rice, pp. 193-206. Copyright © 1960 by Abingdon Press. Used by permission.

## GLOSSARY

**Hymn**—An ode or song of praise or adoration; praise or thanksgiving.

**Lectern**—The reading desk from which the scripture lessons are read at services of worship.

**Litany**—A form of prayer or supplication in which fixed and frequent responses are made by the people.

**Liturgy**—A collection of the formularies for the conduct of public worship.

**Narthex**—A vestibule or portico stretching across the western (back) end of the church, divided from the nave by wall, screen, or railing.

**Nave**—The central division or body of the church extending from the inner door to the choir or chancel, usually separated from the aisles by pillars. The part of the church in which most of the congregation is seated.

**Offertory**—A hymn, prayer, anthem, or instrumental piece sung or played during the gathering of the offering; a term applied generally to that stage in worship in which an offering is made by the people.

**Postlude**—The after piece or concluding number of a service of worship usually played on the organ.

**Prelude**—The introductory musical composition to prepare for the succeeding movements or elements in a service.

**Processional**—A hymn or other selection sung at the opening of a worship service during the orderly and ceremonial process of the choir and clergy to their places.

**Psalter**—A translation or particular version of the Book of Psalms, arranged especially for liturgical or devotional use.

**Pulpit**—A raised structure or enclosed platform in a church or chapel from which the preacher delivers the sermon.

**Recessional**—A hymn sung as the clergy and choir retire formally from the church at the close of a church service.

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**Response**—Part of the liturgy said or sung by the congregation in reply to the minister; as a part of an order of worship.

**Responsive Reading**—An alternate or antiphonal reading between the leader of worship and the congregation in unison, usually a biblical passage.

**Ritual**—A prescribed method for the performance of religious ceremony; also a book setting forth such a system of rites.

**Sacristy**—A room in a religious house or church where the sacred vessels and vestments are kept. (*See Vestry.*)

**Sanctuary**—An appropriate place of worship as contrasted to a mere auditorium. More technically, that portion of a church reserved for the altar or communion table.

**Symbolism**—The use of conventional or traditional signs to direct attention, awaken responses, and guide behavior in dealing with realities too complex, intimate, or otherwise inaccessible to precise designation.

**Transept**—That section of a cruciform church building forming the arms of the cross.

**Unison Reading**—The people and the minister read in unison the Scripture, prayers, et cetera.

**Versicle**—One of a series of short sentences, said or sung antiphonally in religious services, especially one said by the officiant and followed by the response of the congregation.

**Vestment**—A term applied to any of the garments worn in addition to the regular dress by the clergy and their assistants when performing religious services.

**Vestry**—A room or part of the church in which the vestments, vessels, and records are kept and in which the clergy and choir go before the service of worship. (*See Sacristy.*)

**Voluntary**—A musical selection usually played on the organ, often extemporaneously, and so called because the choice of the music is left to the will of the organist.